

Message Text

SECRET

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11

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R 260816Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8743

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 3354

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB, VS, LA

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON NEGOTIATIONS

1. IN A CONVERSATION WITH CAMBODIAN, FRENCH, RUSSIAN AND U.S. AMBASSADORS YESTERDAY IN LUANG PRABANG, PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUA VOLUNTERED UNEQUIVOCALLY TO HELP MEDIATE PEACE SETTLEMENTS IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. CHATTING AT A RECEPTION AFTER THE INSTALLATION OF THE NEW NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL, PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUA COMMENTED THAT ALTHOUGH LAOS APPEARED TO BE WELL ON THE WAY TOWARDS PEACE, CONTINUING WARFARE IN OTHER PARTS OF INDOCHINA WAS A CAUSE OF GREAT CONCERN AND MIGHT OBVIOUSLY LEAD TO RENEWED WARFARE IN THIS KINGDOM. AS HE HAS IN THE PAST, THE PRIME MINISTER ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM BY EMPHASIZING THE REASONABLENESS AND POTENTIAL FOR RECONCILIATION OF THE "THIRD FORCE".

2. THE PRIME MINISTER STATED THAT HE WAS GETTING OLD AND WAS CERTAINLY WITHOUT AMBITIONS, BUT THAT IF THERE WERE A ROLE THAT HE COULD PLAY IN HELPING TO BRING

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ABOUT A SETTLEMENT OF THE CONTINUING CONFLICTS IN

CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM, HE STOOD PREPARED TO DEVOTE ALL HIS ENERGIES TO THAT END. IN THE PAST IT HAD BEEN IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO VISIT HANOI BUT SUCH A VISIT WAS POSSIBLE NOW AND HE THEREFORE HOPED TO MAKE A LONG DEFERRED VISIT TO SAIGON AND A SUBSEQUENT VISIT TO HANOI. THE SITUATION IN LAOS WAS PROGRESSING NICELY AND AS SOON AS HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT POLITICAL STABILITY WAS ASSURED, HE WOULD TAKE AN EXTENSIVE TRIP TO VARIOUS CAPITALS STARTING WITH THE TWO VIETNAMS. SOUVANNA STRESSED THAT DESPITE HIS AGE, MANY OF THE LEADERS IN BOTH VIETNAMS WERE FRIENDS OF HIS, CITING PARTICULARLY DR. TRAN VAN DO AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER VU VAN MAU. HE ALSO MENTIONED A LAW PROFESSOR IN NORTH VIETNAM WHOM HE CONSIDERED TO BE REASONABLE AND MODERATE.

3. SOUTH VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR THUY TRIED GAMELY TO HIGHLIGHT THE REASONABLE AND FORTHCOMING POSITIONS OF THE GVN AND I NOTED THAT PRESIDENT THIEU HAD ASSIGNED DR. DO TO THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS. WE BOTH SUGGESTED THAT SOME RESTRAINT ON THE PART OF HANOI WOULD APPEAR TO BE AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP IN ACHIEVING A PROPITIOUS NEGOTIATING CLIMATE. THE PRIME MINISTER STATED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI HAD TRADITIONALLY BEEN CONSIDERED THE ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP. IN HIS VIEW, HOWEVER, THE GVN SHOULD SEEK A MEASURE OF RECONCILIATION WITH THE PRG AFTER WHICH THE TWO SOUTHERN PARTIES COULD TAKE ON NVN.

4. WITH REGARD TO CAMBODIA, THE PRIME MINISTER COMMENTED THAT THE DIFFICULTY OF COMMENCING NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES WAS OBVIOUSLY VERY GREAT. HERE AGAIN HE HAD MANY FRIENDS AND IF THERE WERE ANYTHING HE COULD DO TO HELP RESTORE PEACE TO CAMBODIA, HE STOOD READY TO PLAY ANY ROLE IN WHICH HE MIGHT PERFORM USEFULLY.

5. COMMENT: THE MANNER IN WHICH SOUVANNA MADE THE FOREGOING PITCH MADE IT OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS SPEAKING FOR THE RECORD AND I ASSUME MY COLLEAGUES WHO WERE PRESENT ARE DUTIFULLY REPORTING THIS EXCHANGE. WHILE IT IS HARD TO SEE WHAT ROLE SOUVANNA HIMSELF CAN PLAY
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AT THIS TIME, I AM INCLINED TO THINK THAT HIS PROPOSED VISIT TO SAIGON AND HANOI (AND PARTICULARLY TO HANOI) CANNOT HELP BUT BE USEFUL.
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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